

T H E
K I N G ³

AND THE

Miller of Mansfield.

A DRAMATIC TALE.

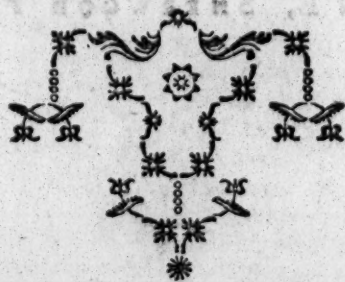
As it is Acted at the

T H E A T R E S - R O Y A L

I N

Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden.

By Mr. D O D S L E Y.



L O N D O N :

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M DCC LXXVII.

Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

The KING.

RICHARD, the Miller's Son.

The MILLER.

Lord LUREWELL.

Courtiers, and Keepers of the Forest.

W O M E N.

PEGGY.

KATE.

MARGERY.

SCENE, SHERWOOD FOREST.

The King and the Miller of Mansfield.

SCENE, Sherwood Forest.

Enter several Courtiers, as if lost.

1st Court. 'TIS horrid dark! and this wood, I believe, has neither end nor side.

4th Court. You mean, to get out at; for we have found one in, you see.

2d Court. I wish our good King Harry had kept near home to hunt; in my mind, the pretty tame deer in London, make much better sport than the wild ones in Sherwood Forest.

3d Court. I can't tell which way his Majesty went, nor whether any body is with him or not; but let us keep together, pray.

4th Court. Ay, ay, like true courtiers, take care of ourselves, whatever becomes of master.

2d Court. Well, it's a terrible thing to be lost in the dark,

4th Court. It is. And yet it's so common a case, that one would not think it should be at all so. Why, we are all of us lost in the dark every day of our lives. Knaves keep us in the dark by their cunning, and fools by their ignorance. Divines lose us in dark mysteries; lawyers in dark cases; and statesmen in dark intrigues: Nay, the light of reason, which we so much boast of, what is it but a dark-lantern, which just serves to prevent us from running our nose against a post, perhaps; but is no more able to lead us out of the dark mills of error and ignorance, in which we are lost, than an ignis fatuus would be to conduct us out of this wood.

1st Court. But, my lord, this is no time for preaching, methinks. And, for all your morals, daylight would be much preferable to this darkness, I believe.

3d Court. Indeed wou'd it. But, come, let us go on; we shall find some house or other by and by.

4th Court. Come along. *[Exeunt.]*

Enter the King alone.

No, no, this can be no public road, that's certain. I am lost, quite lost, indeed. Of what advantage is it now to be a King? Night shews me no respect: I cannot see better, nor walk so well as another man. What is a King? Is he not wiser than another man? Not without his counsellors, I plainly find. Is he not more powerful? I oft have been told so, indeed; but what now can my power command? Is he not greater and more magnificent? When seated on his throne, and surrounded with nobles and flatterers, perhaps he may think so; but when lost in a wood, alas! what is he but a common man? His wisdom knows not which is north and which is south; his power a beggar's dog would bark at; and his greatness the beggar would not bow to. And yet how oft are we puffed up with these

false attributes? Well, in losing the monarch, I have found the man.

[The report of a gun is heard.]
Hark! some villain, sure, is near! What were it best to do? Will my Majesty protect me? No. Throw Majesty aside then, and let manhood do it.

Enter the Miller.

Miller. I believe I hear the rogue! Who's there?

King. No rogue, I assure you.

Miller. Little better, friend, I believe. Who fir'd that gun?

King. Not I, indeed.

Miller. You lie, I believe.

King. Lie! lie! how strange it seems to me to be talk'd to in this stile. *[Aside.]* Upon my word I don't.

Miller. Come, come, sirrah, confess; you have shot one of the King's deer, have you not?

King. No, indeed; I owe the King more respect. I heard a gun go off, indeed, and was afraid some robbers might have been near.

Miller. I'm not bound to believe this, friend. Pray who are you? what's your name?

King. Name!

Miller. Name! yes, name. Why you have a name, have not you? Where do you come from? What is your business here?

King. These are questions I have not been us'd to, honest man.

Miller. May be so; but they are questions no honest man would be afraid to answer, I think. So, if you can give no better account of yourself, I shall make bold to take you along with me, if you please.

King. With you! what authority have you to—

Miller. The King's authority, if I must give you an account, Sir. I am John Cockle, the Miller of Mansfield, one of his Majesty's keepers in this forest of Sherwood; and I will let no suspected fellow pass this way, that cannot give a better account of himself than you have done, I promise you.

King. I must submit to my own authority. *[Aside.]* Very well, Sir, I am glad to hear the King has so good an officer; and since I find you have his authority, I will give you a better account of myself, if you will do me the favour to hear it.

Miller. It's more than you deserve, I believe; but let's hear what you can say for yourself?

King. I have the honour to belong to the King, as well as you, and, perhaps, should be as unwilling to see any wrong done him. I came down with him to hunt in this forest, and the chase leading us to-day a great way from home, I am benighted in this wood, and have lost my way.

Miller. This does not sound well: if you have been a hunting, pray where is your horse?

The King and the Miller of Mansfield.

King. I have tired my horse, so that he lay down under me, and I was obliged to leave him.

Miller. If I thought I might believe this now.

King. I am not used to lie, honest man.

Miller. What! do you live at court, and not lie? that's a likely story, indeed!

King. Be that as it will, I speak truth now, I assure you; and, to convince you of it, if you will attend me to Nottingham, if I am near it, or give me a night's lodging in your own house. Here is something to pay you for your trouble; and, if that is not sufficient, I will satisfy you in the morning to your utmost desire.

Miller. Ay, now I am convinced you are a courtier; here is a little bribe for to-day, and a large promise for to-morrow, both in a breath. Here, take it again, and take this along with it—John Cockle is no courtier; he can do what he ought—without a bribe.

King. Thou art a very extraordinary man, I must own; and I should be glad, methinks, to be farther acquainted with thee.

Miller. Thee! and thou! pr'ythee don't thee and thou me: I believe I am as good a man as yourself, at least.

King. Sir, I beg your pardon.

Miller. Nay, I am not angry, friend; only I don't love to be too familiar with any body, before I know whether they deserve it or not.

King. You are in the right. But what am I to do?

Miller. You may do what you please. You are twelve miles from Nottingham, and all the way thro' this thick wood; but if you are resolved upon going thither to night, I will put you in the road, and direct you the best I can; or if you will accept of such poor entertainment as a miller can give, you shall be welcome to stay all night, and in the morning I will go with you myself.

King. And cannot you go with me to night?

Miller. I would not go with you to-night if you were the King.

King. Then I must go with you, I think. [Exit.]

SCENE changes to the Town of Mansfield.

Dick alone.

Well, dear Mansfield, I am glad to see thy face again. But my heart aches, methinks, for fear this should be only a trick of theirs to get me into their power. Yet the letter seems to be wrote with an air of sincerity, I confess; and the girl was never us'd to lie, till she kept a lord company. Let me see, I'll read it once more.

Dear Richard,

I am at last (tho' much too late for me) convinc'd of the injury done to us by that base man, who made me think you false; he contriv'd these letters which I send you, to make me think you just upon the point of being married to another, a thought I could not bear with patience; so, aiming at revenge on you, consented to my own undoing. But, for your own sake, I beg you to return hither, for I have some hopes of being able to do you justice, which is the only comfort of your most distress'd, but ever affectionate,

Peggy.

There can be no cheat in this, sure! The letters she has sent are, I think, a proof of her sincerity. Well, I will go to her, however: I cannot think she will again betray me. If she has as much tenderness left for me, as, in spite of her ill usage, I still feel for her, I'm sure she won't. Let me see, I am not far from the house, I believe. [Exit.]

SCENE changes to a Room.

Peggy and Phoebe.

Phoebe. Pray, Madam, make yourself easy.

Peg. Ah, Phoebe! she that has lost her virtue,

has with it lost her ease, and all her happiness. Believing, cheated fool! to think him false.

Phoebe. Be patient, Madam; I hope you will shortly be reveng'd on that deceitful lord.

Peg. I hope I shall, for that were just revenge. But will revenge make me happy? Will it excuse my falsehood? Will it restore me to the heart of my much-injur'd love? Ah! no. That blooming innocence he us'd to praise, and call the greatest beauty of our sex, is gone. I have no charm left that might renew the flame I took such pains to quench.

[Knocking at the door.] See who's there. O heavens, 'tis he! Alas! that ever I should be sham'd to see the man I love!

Enter Richard, who stands looking on her at a distance, she weeping.

Dick. Well, Peggy, (but I suppose you're Madam, now, in that fine dress) you see you have brought me back; is it to triumph in your falsehood? or am I to receive the slighted leavings of your fine lord?

Peg. O Richard! after the injury I have done you, I cannot look on you without confusion: But do not think so hardly of me; I stay'd not to be slighted by him, for the moment I discover'd his vile plot on you, I fled his sight, nor could he ever prevail to see me since.

Dick. Ah, Peggy! you were too hasty in believing; and much I fear, the vengeance aim'd at me, had other charms to recommend it to you: such bravery as that [pointing to her cloaths.] I had not to bestow; but if a tender, honest heart could please, you had it all; and if I wish'd for more, 'twas for your sake.

Peg. O Richard! when you consider the wicked stratagem he contriv'd to make me think you base and deceitful, I hope you will, at least, pity my folly, and, in some measure, excuse my falsehood; that you will forgive me, I dare not hope.

Dick. To be forc'd to fly from my friends and country, for a crime that I was innocent of, is an injury that I cannot easily forgive, to be sure: but if you are less guilty of it than I thought, I shall be very glad; and if your design be really as you say, to clear me, and to expose the baseness of him that betray'd and ruin'd you, I will join with you with all my heart. But how do you propose to do this?

Peg. The King is now in this forest a hunting, and our young lord is every day with him: Now, I think, if we could take some opportunity of throwing ourselves at his Majesty's feet, and complaining of the injustice of one of his courtiers, it might, perhaps, have some effect upon him.

Dick. If we were suffer'd to make him sensible of it, perhaps it might; but the complaints of such little folks as we seldom reach the ears of Majesty.

Peg. We can but try.

Dick. Well, if you will but go with me to my father's, and stay there till such an opportunity happens, I shall believe you in earnest, and will join with you in your design.

Peg. I will do any thing to convince you of my sincerity, and to make satisfaction for the injuries which have been done you.

Dick. Will you go now?

Peg. I'll be with you in less than an hour. [Exit.]

SCENE changes to the Mill.

Margery and Kate knitting.

Kate. O dear, I would not see a spirit for all the world; but I love dearly to hear stories of them. Well, and what then?

Mar. And so at last, in a dismal, hollow tone, it

[A knocking at the door frights them both; they scream out, and throw down their knitting.]

Mar. and Kate. Lord bless us! What's that?

Kate. O dear mother, it's some judgment upon I'm afraid. They say, talk of the devil, and he appear.

Mar. Kate, go and see who's at the door.

Kate. I durst not go, mother; do you go.

Mar. Come, let's both go.

Kate. Now don't speak as if you was afraid.

Mar. No, I won't if I can help it. Who's there?

Dick. [Without.] What! won't you let me in?

Kate. O gemini! it's like our Dick, I think: it's certainly dead, and it's his spirit.

Mar. Heav'n forbid! I think in my heart it's he himself. Open the door, Kate.

Kate. Nay, do you.

Mar. Come, we'll both open it.

[They open the door.]

Enter Dick.

Dick. Dear mother, how do you do? I thought you would not have let me in.

Mar. Dear child, I'm overjoy'd to see thee; but I was so frightened, I did not know what to do.

Kate. Dear brother, I am glad to see you; how have you done this long while?

Dick. Very well, Kate. But where's my father?

Mar. He heard a gun go off just now, and he's gone to see who 'tis.

Dick. What they love venison at Mansfield as well as ever, I suppose?

Kate. Ay, and they will have it too.

Miller. [Without.] Ho! Madge! Kate! bring a light here.

Mar. Yonder he is.

Kate. Has he catch'd the rogue, I wonder?

Enter the King and the Miller.

Mar. Who have you got?

Miller. I have brought thee a stranger, Madge; you must give him a supper, and a lodging if thou canst.

Mar. You have got a better stranger of your own, I can tell you: Dick's come.

Miller. Dick! Where is he? Why Dick! How is he, my lad?

Dick. Very well, I thank you, father.

King. A little more, and you had push'd me down.

Miller. Faith, Sir, you must excuse me; I was overjoy'd to see my boy. He has been at London, and I have not seen him these four years.

King. Well, I shall once in my life have the happiness of being treated as a common man; and of being human nature without disguise. [Aside.]

Miller. What has brought thee home so unexpected?

Dick. You will know that presently.

Miller. Of that by-and-bye then. We have got the King down in the forest a hunting this season, and this honest gentleman, who came down with his Majesty from London, has been with 'em to-day, it seems, and has lost his way. Come, Madge, see what thou canst get for supper. Kill a couple of the best fowls; and go you, Kate, and draw a pitcher of ale. We are famous, Sir, at Mansfield, for good ale, and for honest fellows that know how to drink it.

King. Good ale will be acceptable, at present, for I am very dry. But pray, how came your son to leave you, and go to London?

Miller. Why, that's a story which Dick, perhaps, won't like to have told.

King. Then I don't desire to hear it.

Enter Kate, with an earthen pitcher of ale and a towel.

Miller. So, now do you go help your mother—Sir, my hearty service to you.

King. Thank ye, Sir. This plain sincerity and freedom is a happiness unknown to kings. [Aside.]

Miller. Come, Sir.

King. Richard, my service to you.

Dick. Thank you, Sir.

Miller. Well, Dick, and how dost thou like London? Come, tell us what thou hast seen?

Dick. Seen! I have seen the land of promise.

Miller. The land of promise! What dost thou mean?

Dick. The court, father.

Miller. Thou wilt never leave joking.

Dick. To be serious then: I have seen the disappointment of my hopes and expectations; and that's more than one would wish to see.

Miller. What! would the great man, thou wast recommended to, do nothing at all for thee at last?

Dick. Why, yes; he would promise me to the last?

Miller. Zoons! do the courtiers think their dependents can eat promises?

Dick. No, no; they never trouble their heads to think, whether we eat at all or not. I have now dangled after his lordship several years, tantaliz'd with hopes and expectations; this year, promised one place, the next another, and the third, in sure and certain hope of—a disappointment. One fails, and it was promised before; another, and I am just half an hour too late; a third, and it stops the mouth of a creditor; a fourth, and it pays the hire of a flatterer; a fifth, and it bribes a vote; and the sixth, I am promised still. But having thus slept away four years, I awoke from my dream: My lord, I found, was so far from having it in his power to get a place for me, that he had been all this while seeking after one for himself.

Miller. Poor Dick! And is plain honesty, then, a recommendation to no place at court?

Dick. It may recommend you to be a footman, perhaps, but nothing farther, nothing farther, indeed. If you look higher, you must furnish yourself with other qualifications: You must learn to say Ay, or No; to run, or stand; to fetch or carry, or leap over a stick at the word of command. You must be master of the arts of flattery, insinuation, dissimulation, application, and [pointing to his palm] right application too, if you hope to succeed.

King. You don't consider I am a courtier, methinks.

Dick. Not I, indeed; 'tis no concern of mine what you are. If in general my character of the court is true, 'tis not my fault if it's disagreeable to your worship. There are particular exceptions, I own, and I hope you may be one.

King. Nay, I don't want to be flatter'd, so let that pass. Here's better success to you the next time you come to London.

Dick. I thank ye; but I don't design to see it again in haste.

Miller. No no, Dick; instead of depending upon lords' promises, depend upon the labour of thine own hands; expect nothing but what thou canst earn, and then thou wilt not be disappointed. But come, I want a description of London; thou hast told us nothing thou hast seen yet.

Dick. O! 'tis a fine place! I have seen large houses with small hospitality; great men do little actions; and fine ladies do nothing at all. I have seen the honest lawyers of Westminster-hall, and the virtuous inhabitants of 'Change-alley; the politic madmen of coffee-houses, and the wise statesmen of

Bedlam. I have seen merry tragedies, and sad comedies; devotion at an opera, and mirth at a sermon; I have seen fine cloaths at St. James's, and long bills at Ludgate-hill. I have seen poor grandeur, and rich poverty; high honours, and low flattery; great pride, and no merit. In short, I have seen a fool with a title, a knave with a pension, and an honest man with a thread-bare coat. Pray how do you like London?

Miller. And is this the best description thou canst give of it?

Dick. Yes.

King. Why, Richard, you are a satirist, I find.

Dick. I love to speak truth, Sir; if that happens to be satire, I can't help it.

Miller. Well, if this is London, give me my country cottage; which, tho' it is not a great house, not a fine house, is my own house, and I can shew a receipt for the building on't. But come, Sir, our supper, I believe, is ready for us, by this time; and to such as I have, you're welcome as a prince.

King. I thank you.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE changes to the Wood.

Enter several Keepers.

1st Keeper. The report of a gun was somewhere this way, I'm sure.

2d Keeper. Yes; but I can never believe that any body would come a deer-stealing so dark a night as this.

3d Keeper. Where did the deer harbour to-day?

4th Keeper. There was a herd lay upon Hamilton-hill, another just by Robin-Hood's chair, and a third here in Mansfield Wood.

1st Keeper. Ay; those they have been amongst.

2d Keeper. But we shall never be able to find 'em to-night, 'tis so dark.

3d Keeper. No, no; let's go back again.

1st Keeper. Zoons! you're afraid of a broken head, I suppose, if we should find 'em; and so had rather sink back again. Hark! stand close. I hear 'em coming this way.

Enter the Courtiers.

1st Courtier. Did not you hear somebody just now? Faith, I begin to be afraid we shall meet with some misfortune to-night.

2d Courtier. Why if any body should take what we have got, we have made a fine business of it.

3d Courtier. Let them take it if they will; I am so tir'd I shall make but small resistance.

[*The Keepers rush upon them.*]

2d Keeper. Ay, rogues, rascals, and villains; you have got it, have you?

2d Courtier. Indeed we have got but very little; but what we have, you are welcome to, if you will but use us civilly.

1st Keeper. O, yes! very civilly; you deserve to be us'd civilly, to be sure.

4th Courtier. Why, what have we done that we may not be civilly us'd?

1st Keeper. Come, come, don't trifle; surrender.

1st Courtier. I have but three half-crowns about me.

2d Courtier. Here's three and six-pence for you, gentlemen.

3d Courtier. Here's my watch; I have no money at all.

4th Courtier. Indeed I have nothing in my pocket but a snuff-box.

4th Keeper. What! the dogs want to bribe us, do they? No rascals; you shall go before the Justice to-morrow, depend on't.

4th Courtier. Before the Justice! What! for being robb'd?

1st Keeper. For being robb'd! What do you mean? Who has robb'd you?

4th Courtier. Why did not you just now demand our money, gentlemen?

2d Keeper. O, the rascals; they will swear a robbery against us, I warrant.

4th Courtier. A robbery! Ay, to be sure.

1st Keeper. No, no; we did not demand your money, we demanded the deer you have kill'd.

4th Courtier. The devil take the deer, I say; he let us a chace of six hours, and got away from us at last.

1st Keeper. Zoons! ye dogs, do ye think to banter us? I tell ye you have this night shot one of the King's deer. Did not we hear the gun go off? Did not we hear you say, you was afraid it should be taken from you?

2d Courtier. We were afraid our money should be taken from us.

1st Keeper. Come, come, no more shuffling: I tell ye you're all rogues, and we'll have you hang'd, you may depend on't. Come, let's take them to old Cockle's; we're not far off: we'll keep 'em there all night, and to-morrow morning we'll away with 'em before the Justice.

4th Courtier. A very pretty adventure!

SCENE changes to the Mill.

King, Miller, Margery, and Dick, at Supper.

Miller. Come, Sir, you must mend a bad supper with a glass of good ale; here's King Harry's health.

King. With all my heart. Come, Richard, here's King Harry's health; I hope you are courtier enough to pledge me, are not you?

Dick. Yes, yes, Sir, I'll drink the King's health with all my heart.

Margery. Come, Sir, my humble service to you, and much good may do ye with your poor supper; I wish it had been better.

King. You need make no apologies.

Margery. We are obliged to your goodness in excusing our rudeness.

Miller. Pr'ythee, Margery, don't trouble the gentleman with compliments.

Margery. Lord, husband, if one had no more manners than you, the gentleman would take us all for hogs.

Miller. Now I think, the more compliments the less manners.

King. I think so too. Compliments in discourse, I believe, are like ceremonies in religion; the one has destroy'd all true piety, and the other all sincerity and plain dealing.

Miller. Then a fig for all ceremony, and compliments too: give us thy hand, and let us drink and be merry.

King. Right, honest miller, let us drink and be merry. Come, have you got e'er a good song?

Miller. Ah! my singing days are over, but my man Joe has got an excellent one; and if you have a mind to hear it, I'll call him in.

King. With all my heart.

Miller. Joe!

Enter Joe.

Miller. Come, Joe, drink boy; I have promis'd this gentleman that you shall sing him your last new song.

Joe. Well, master, if you have promis'd it him, he shall have it.

S O N G.

I.

*How happy a state does the Miller possess,
Who would be no greater, nor fears to be less!
On his mill and himself he depends for support,
Which is better than servily cringing at court.*

II.

at tho' be all dusty and ruben'd does go,
more be's bespewder'd, the more like a beau;
shown in this dress may be honest far
an a courtier who struts in his garter and star.

III.

his hands are so daub'd they're not fit to be seen,
the hands of his betters are not very clean;
palm more polite may as dirtily deal;
old, in bandling, will stick to the fingers like meal.

IV.

but if, when a pudding for dinner be lacks,
cribs, without scruple, from other men's sacks;
this of right noble example be brags,
so borrow as freely from other men's bags.

V.

should be endeavour to heap an estate,
this be would mimic the tools of the state;
these aim is alone their own coffers to fill,
all his concern's to bring grist to his mill.

VI.

eats when he's hungry, he drinks when he's dry,
and down when he's weary contented does lie;
then rises up early to work and to sing:
so happy a Miller, then who'd be a King?

Miller. There's a song for you.

King. He should go sing this at court, I think.

Dick. I believe, if he's wife, he will chuse to
sing at home tho'.

Enter Peggy.

Miller. What wind blew you hither, pray! you
have a good share of impudence, or you wou'd be a-
m'd to set your foot within my house, methinks.

Peg. Asham'd I am, indeed, but do not call me
impudent.

[Weeps.]

Dick. Dear father, suspend your anger for the
present; that she is here now is by my direction,
and to do me justice.

Peg. To do that is all that is now in my power;
as to myself, I am ruin'd past redemption; my
character, my virtue, my peace, are gone: I am
abandoned by my friends, despis'd by the world, and
pos'd to misery and want.

King. Pray let me know the story of your misfor-
tunes; perhaps it may be in my power to do some-
thing towards redressing them.

Peg. That you may learn from him whom I have
soug'd; but as for me, shame will not let me
speak, or hear it told.

[Exit.]

King. She's very pretty.

Dick. O, Sir, I once thought her an angel! I lov'd
her dearer than my life, and did believe her passion
was the same for me: but a young nobleman of this
neighbourhood happening to see her, her youth and
glimmering beauty presently struck his fancy; a thou-
sand artifices were immediately employ'd to debauch
and ruin her. But all his arts were vain; not even
the promise of making her his wife, could prevail
on her: in a little time he found out her love to
me; and, imagining this to be the cause of her re-
fusal, he, by forg'd letters, and feign'd stories, con-
vinc'd to make her believe I was on the point of mar-
riage with another woman. Possess'd with this opi-
nion, she, in a rage, writes me word, never to see
her more; and, in revenge, consented to her own
ruin. Not contented with this, nor easy while
she was so near, he brib'd one of his cast-off mistres-
ses to wear a child to me, which she did: this
was the occasion of my leaving my friends, and fly-
ing to London.

King. And how does she propose to do you justice?

Dick. Why, the King being now in this forest a-
hunting, we design to take some opportunity of

throwing ourselves at his majesty's feet, and com-
plaining of the injustice done us by this noble villain.

Miller. Ah! Dick! I expect but little redress from
such an application. Things of this nature are so
common among the great, that I am afraid it would
only be made a jest of.

King. Those that can make a jest of what ought
to be shocking to humanity, surely deserve not the
name of great or noble men.

Dick. What do you think of it, Sir? If you be-
long to the court, you, perhaps, may know some-
thing of the King's temper.

King. Why, if I can judge of his temper at all,
I think he would not suffer the greatest nobleman
in his court, to do an injustice to the meanest sub-
ject in his kingdom. But, pray, who is the noble-
man that is capable of such actions as these?

Dick. Do you know my lord Lurewell?

King. Yes.

Dick. That's the man.

King. Well, I would have you put your design in
execution. 'Tis my opinion the king would not on-
ly hear your complaint, but redress your injuries.

Miller. I wish it may prove so.

Enter the Keepers, leading in the Courtiers.

1st Keeper. Hola! Cockle! where are ye? why,
man, we have nabb'd a pack of rogues here just in
the fact.

King. Ha, ha, ha! what turn'd highwaymen,
my lords? or deer-stealers?

1st Court. I am very glad to find your majesty in
health and safety.

2d Court. We have run thro' a great many perils
and dangers to-night: but the joy of finding your
majesty so unexpectedly, will make us forget all we
have suffer'd.

Miller and Dick. What! is this the king?

King. I am very glad to see you, my lords, I con-
fess; and particularly you, my lord Lurewell.

Lure. Your majesty does me honour.

King. Yes, my lord; and I will do you justice too;
your honour has been highly wrong'd by this young
man.

Lure. Wrong'd, my liege.

King. I hope so, my lord; for I would fain be-
lieve you can't be guilty of baseness and treachery.

Lure. I hope your majesty will never find me so.
What dares this villain say?

Dick. I am not to be frighted, my lord, I dare
speak truth at any time.

Lure. Whatever stains my honour must be false.

King. I know it must, my lord: yet has this man,
not knowing who I was, presum'd to charge your
lordship, not only with great injustice to himself,
but also with ruining an innocent virgin whom he
lov'd, and who was to have been his wife; which,
if true, were base and treacherous; but I know 'tis
false, and therefore leave it to your lordship to say
what punishment I shall inflict upon him, for the in-
jury done to your honour.

Lure. I thank your majesty, I will not be severe;
he shall only ask my pardon, and to-morrow morn-
ing be obliged to marry the creature he has traduc'd
me with.

King. This is mild. Well, you hear your sentence.

Dick. May I not have leave to speak before your
majesty?

King. What canst thou say?

Dick. If I had your majesty's permission, I be-
lieve I have certain witnesses which will undeniably
prove the truth of all I have accus'd his lordship of.

King. Produce them.

Dick. Peggy!

The King and the Miller of Mansfield.

Enter Peggy.

King. Do you know this woman, my lord?

Lure. I know her, please your majesty, by sight; she is a tenant's daughter.

Peg. [*Aside.*] Majesty! What, is this the king?

Dick. Yes.

King. Have you no particular acquaintance with her?

Lure. Hum—I have not seen her these several months.

Dick. True, my lord; and that is part of your accusation; for, I believe, I have some letters which will prove your lordship once had a more particular acquaintance with her. Here is one of the first his lordship wrote to her, full of the tenderest and most solemn protestations of love and constancy; here is another, which will inform your majesty of the pains he took to ruin her; there is an absolute promise of marriage before he could accomplish it.

King. What say you, my lord, are these your hand?

Lure. I believe, please your majesty, I might have a little affair of gallantry with the girl some time ago.

King. It was a little affair, my lord; a mean affair; and what you call gallantry, I call infamy. Do you think, my lord, that greatness gives a sanction to wickedness? Or that it is the prerogative of lords to be unjust and inhuman? You remember the sentence which yourself pronounced upon this innocent man; you cannot think it hard that it should pass on you who are guilty.

Lure. I hope your majesty will consider my rank, and not oblige me to marry her.

King. Your rank, my lord! Greatness that stoops to actions base and low, deserts its rank, and pulls its honour down. What makes your lordship great! is it your gilded equipage and dress? then put it on your meanest slave, and he's as great as you. Is it your riches or estate? the villain that should plunder you of all, would then be as great as you. No, my lord, he that acts greatly, is the true great man. I therefore think you ought, in justice, to marry her you thus have wrong'd.

Peg. Let my tears thank your majesty. But alas! I am afraid to marry this young lord; that would only give him power to use me worse, and still increase my misery: I therefore beg your majesty will not command him to do it.

King. Rise then, and hear me. My lord, you see how low the greatest nobleman may be reduced by ungen'rous actions. Here is, under your own hand, an absolute promise of marriage to this young

woman, which, from a thorough knowledge of unworthiness, she has prudently declined to you fulfil. I shall therefore not insist upon it; I command you, upon pain of my displeasure, immediately to settle on her three hundred pounds.

Peg. May heaven reward your majesty's goodness! 'Tis too much for me; but if your majesty think fit, let it be settled upon this much-injur'd man, make some satisfaction for the wrongs which have been done him. As to myself, I only sought to clear the innocence of him I lov'd and wrong'd, then to save me from the world, and die forgiven.

Dick. This act of gen'rous virtue cancels all my failings; come to my arms, and be as dear as ever.

Peg. You cannot, sure, forgive me!

Dick. I can, I do, and still will make you mine.

Peg. O! why did I ever wrong such gen'rous love?

Dick. Talk no more of it. Here let us kneel, and thank the goodness which has made us blest.

King. May you be happy.

Miller. [*Kneels.*] After I have seen so much of your majesty's goodness, I cannot despair of pardon, even for the rough usage your majesty received from me.

[*The King draws his sword; the Miller is frighten'd and rises up, thinking he was going to kill him.*]

What have I done, that I should lose my life?

King. Kneel without fear. No, my good friend, so far are you from having any thing to pardon, that I am much your debtor. I cannot think but so good and honest a man will make a worthy and honourable knight; so rise up, Sir John Cockle: and, to support your state, and in some sort requite the pleasure you have done us, a thousand marks a year shall be your revenue.

Miller. Your majesty's bounty I receive with thankfulness; I have been guilty of no meaner sin than to obtain it, and hope I shall not be obliged to keep upon base conditions; for, tho' I am willing to be a faithful subject, I am resolved to be a free and honest man.

King. I rely upon your being so: and, to the friendship of such a one, I shall always think an addition to my happiness, tho' a king.

*Worth, in whatever state, is sure a prize,
Which kings, of all men, ought not to despise;
By selfish sycophants so close besieg'd,
'Tis by mere chance a worthy man's oblig'd:
But hence, to every courtier be it known,
Virtue shall find protection from the throne.*



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